



## DELAWARE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

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**To: Newsroom Directors and Assignment Editors**

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### **Soybean Rust – Not here yet Delaware is prepared**

*Farmers urged to use the toll-free Soybean Rust Hotline (866-234-1347) for information*

Asian soybean rust is a new fungus disease that threatens soybeans nationally, as well as in Delaware. As the state's largest acreage row crop (180,000 acres) soybeans are an important part of our state's agricultural industry. As a large component of chicken feed most of the soybeans grown are used here on Delmarva. Soybean rust has the potential to significantly reduce growers' yields of soybeans, but with the advance warning, surveying, effective fungicides, and educational outreach growers in Delaware should be prepared to meet this fungus disease head-on.

What are the chances of the disease coming to the Delmarva Peninsula? We have found no evidence of the disease in this area, but it is hard to predict when, if ever and how much will occur here on Delmarva. Asian soybean rust has been present in the Far East for a very long time but in recent history has moved to Africa, South America and just last fall to the US for the first time. This fungus produces spores that are capable of long distance travel in high altitude wind currents. It took Hurricane Ivan last fall to move the fungus from Colombia, South America to several southern states late in the 2004 growing season. The fungus was able to over winter on another host, the weedy vine called kudzu, in southern parts of Florida. It is now beginning to occur in soybeans in Florida, Georgia, Alabama, and Mississippi at the present time. The amount of infection is still low, but ideal weather for infection as well as the threat of tropical storms and hurricanes that can move spores long distances increases the chances of the disease appearing in our region.

Unfortunately there is no resistance to this disease in our current soybean varieties. Researchers have been working on providing disease resistant varieties but it will possibly be five to ten years before anything is on the market. Currently, fungicides are the only defense against soybean rust. When soybean rust arrived in Brazil, the United States began to prepare for it to spread to the U.S. There were very few fungicides registered in the United States to control it. Fungicides were registered for use through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency through a process called section 18 Emergency registrations.

#### **Delaware preparations:**

- The Delaware Department of Agriculture (DDA) officials along with the University of Delaware Extension Specialist have worked to have all twelve section 18 fungicides registered for use in Delaware.

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- A Soybean Rust Task Force was organized by the Secretary of Agriculture last fall to develop a coordinated plan for responding to this disease.
  - A plan was developed including educational efforts to inform the agricultural community about the disease and how to control it.
  - Workshops were held beginning in January with the winter Agronomy Days. Subsequently six Extension soybean rust meetings were held in farm communities from Dagsboro to Blackbird in February and March.
  - A pocket sized field guide with pictures and other fact sheets provided by USDA were distributed to those that attended and are available at the county Extension offices and the DDA.
  - In June a Sprayer Clinic for Applying Fungicides for Soybean Rust with Ground Sprayers was held. At this event, an application technology expert from DuPont Crop Protection provided growers and custom applicators with the best information on how to apply fungicides for soybean rust control.
- The Delaware Soybean Board is funding a survey of soybeans statewide during this season to detect soybean rust early and provide a warning to growers.
  - Coordinated through the DDA, with training from Extension, the survey staff has been visiting 50 soybean fields weekly, throughout the State, looking for symptoms of rust.
  - “Sentinel plots” or early warning plots are in place. These plots are very small fields that were planted very early, mid-April, before most growers would plant. The plots will be at the right stage for infection earlier than the soybeans planted by growers. If the disease comes to Delaware, it should appear in the sentinel plots first, giving the growers an early warning that will allow them to implement appropriate fungicide procedures.
- Delaware and Maryland Cooperative Extension have launched a toll free hotline number that provides a recorded message on the status of soybean rust and a risk level for our area. Hopefully growers that want a quick update or warning on when, or if, to spray will use this source, especially those that might not have web access. **The toll-free Soybean Rust Hotline number is 1-866-234-1347.**

Growers and consultants who want to submit a plant sample to determine whether or not it is infected with soybean rust should contact their county cooperative extension agent.

Farmers with crop insurance are encouraged to talk with their crop insurance agent to fully understand their responsibilities if Asian soybean rust impacts in the state.

Information on soybean rust is available from many sources including the USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection service ([www.aphis.usda.gov](http://www.aphis.usda.gov)), Cooperative Extension, state departments of Agriculture, and the agricultural industry.

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